

Supreme Court Justice and Johnson Talk the Night of JFK's Assassination

November 22, 1963

President Johnson: I just didn't want to leave my desk tonight without telling you that you're gonna have to do some heavy thinking; for me -

Arthur Goldberg: Dorothy and I came out to the airport to see you, but there were so many people around.

LBJ: There's no one in the world I would have rather seen than you-

AG: All we can say is we have complete confidence in you -

LBJ: Well, don't be so damn modest and shy. I want you to come in and out now... I don't know what's proper, but there at the airport, you let me know it because I need all the strength you can give me.

AG: We wanted to wish you well and also express our grave - look, if theres anything at all that I can do -

LBJ: I want you to be thinking about what I ought to do to try to bring all these elements together and unite this country. And the main thing to preserve our system in the world because if it starts falling to pieces and some of the extremes are going to - get proceeding on the wrong assumption, why we could deteriorate, pretty quick.

AG: It won't. I have no doubt about that

LBJ: I want you to think, just think capital, just think, think, think. And talk to me tomorrow or the next day.

AG: Anytime. Anytime

LBJ: I want to give some thought, by the way, whether we ought to have a joint session of Congress - after, and what would I say to them? Think about it.

AG: I think we ought to -

LBJ: Well. I want you to think about who I talk to on the delivery side and how I ought to do it without - I mean with dignity and reserve and without being down on my knees, but at the same time, men who'll have respect and confidence. There's nobody in town I believe in more than you and I have just got to have your help

AG: Well, it is there for the asking and we wish you every good fortune in the world. You'll do well, we have complete confidence. Dorothy would like to talk to you.

LBJ: Well, I'm totally inadequate, but I'll do my best.

AG: No not at all. I'm at your service. Here she is...[call ends].

Johnson Solicits Loyalty from Kennedy Aide

November 25, 1963

President Johnson: Needless to say, I'm most anxious for you to continue just like you have been, because I need you a lot more than he did.

Larry O'Brien: Mr. President, Ken is here with me. Do you have an immediate problem?

LBJ: No, no, I just wanted you to know how strongly I felt about you and Ken and all the rest of the staff, and I had talked to some of them individually, but I hadn't had a chance to run into you, and I think you know the confidence I have in you and admiration I have for you.

LO: I know that, Mr. President.

LBJ: I don't expect you to love me as much as you did him, but I expect you will after you've been around awhile.

LO: Right, Mr. President.

President Johnson Reaches Out to Jackie Kennedy in the Aftermath of JFK's Assassination

December 2, 1963

Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy: Mr. President?

President Johnson: I just wanted you to know you were loved-and by so many and so much I'm one of them.

JBK: Oh, Mr. President, I tried, I didn't dare bother you again. But I got Kenny O'Donnell over here to give you a message, if he ever saw you. Did he give it to you yet?

LBJ: No.

JBK: About my letter? That was waiting for me last night?

LBJ: Listen, sweetie. Now the first thing you got to learn- you got some things to learn -and one of them is that you don't bother me, you give me strength.

JBK: But I wasn't going to send you in one more letter. I was just scared you'd answer it.

LBJ: Don't send me anything, don't send me anything. You just come over and put your arm around me. That's all you do. And when you haven't got anything else to do, let's take a walk. Let's walk around the back yard. And just let me tell you how much you mean to all of us, and how we can carry on, if you give us a little strength.

JBK: But you know what I wanted to say to you about that letter? I know how rare a letter is in a president's handwriting. Do you know that I've got more in your handwriting than I do in Jack's now? And for you to write it at this time and then to send me that thing today, and you know, your Cape announcement and everything.

LBJ: I want you to just know this - that I told my mama a long time ago, when everybody else gave up about my election in '48, my mother and my wife and my sisters - you females got a lot of courage that we men don't have. And so we have to rely on you and depend on you, and you got something to do. You got the President relying on you. And this is not the first one you had. So there are not many women, you know, running around with a good many Presidents. So you got the biggest job of your life.

JBK: She ran around with two Presidents, that's what they'll say about me. O.K. Anytime.

LBJ: Good bye, darling.

JBK: Thank you for calling, Mr. President. Good bye.

LBJ: Goodbye Sweetie. Do come by.

JBK: I will.

J. Edgar Hoover Suggests 'Bulletproof Car'

November 29, 1963

JEH: It seems to me that the President ought to always be in a bulletproof car. It certainly would prevent anything like this ever happening again. It doesn't mean you could have a thousand Secret Service men on guard and still a sniper can snipe you from up on the window, if you are exposed, like the President was. But you can't do it if you have a solid top, bulletproof top to it, as it should be.

LBJ: You mean, if I ride around my ranch, I ought to be in a bulletproof car?

JEH: Well I would certainly think so Mr. President, it seems to me that that car down at your ranch there...the little car that we rode around in when I was down there, I think it ought to be bulletproof. I think it ought to be done very quietly; there's a concern there out in Cincinnati where we have our cars bulletproofed. I think we've got four - one on the West Coast, one in New York, and one here. And I think it can be done quietly without any publicity being given to it or any pictures being taken of it, if it's handled properly. But I think you ought to have precautions because -on that ranch - it is perfectly easy for somebody to get on the ranch.

LBJ: Think those entrances all ought to be guarded though, don't you?

JEH: Oh, I think by all means, I think by all means. I think you've got to recognize, you've got to really, almost be in the capacity of a so-called prisoner because without that security anything can be done...

Telephone conversation between President Johnson and Senator Richard Russell

November 29, 1963 8:55 p.m.

President Johnson: Dick?

Senator Russell: Yes.

LBJ: I hate to bother you again but I wanted you to know I that I made an announcement.

RR: Announcement of what?

LBJ: Of this Special Commission.

RR: Oh, you have already?

LBJ: Yes, may I read it to you. "The President announced that he is appointing a Special Commission to study and report upon all the facts and circumstances relating to the assassination of the late President John F. Kennedy and the subsequent violent death of the man charged with the assassination. The President stated that the Majority and Minority leadership of the Senate and the House had been consulted with respect to the proposed Special Commission. The members of the Special Commission are: Chief Justice Earl Warren, Chairman; Senator Richard Russell, Georgia; Senator John Sherman Cooper, Kentucky; Rep. Hale Boggs, Louisiana; Rep.

Gerald Ford, Michigan; Honorable Allen Dulles, Washington; Honorable John S. McCloy, New York. The President stated the Special Commission is to be instructed to evaluate all available information concerning the subject of inquiry. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, pursuant to an earlier directive of the President is making complete investigations of the facts. An inquiry is scheduled by the Texas Court of Inquiry, convened by the Attorney General of Texas under Texas law. The Special Commission will have before it all the evidence uncovered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and all the information available to any agencies of the Federal Government. The Attorney General of Texas has also offered his cooperation. All federal agencies and offices are being directed to furnish services in cooperation to the Special Commission. The Commission will also be empowered to conduct any further investigation as deemed desirable. The President is instructing the Special Commission to satisfy itself that the truth is known as far as it can be discovered and to report its findings and conclusions to him, to the American people, and to the world."

RR: Well, now Mr. President, I know I don't have to tell you of my devotion to you, but I just can't serve on that Commission. I'm highly honored you'd think about me in connection with it, but I couldn't serve on it. With Chief Justice Warren--I don't like that man. I don't have any confidence in him. I realize he is a much greater man in the United States than anyone and so you get John Stennis.

LBJ: Dick, it has already been announced and you can serve with anybody for the good of America and this is a question that has a good many more ramifications than on the surface and we've got to take this out of the arena where they're testifying that Khrushchev and Castro did this and did that and kicking us into a war that can kill 40 million Americans in an hour and you would put on your uniform in a minute. Now the reason I've asked Warren is because he is the Chief Justice of this country and we've got to have the highest judicial people we can have. The reason I ask you is because you have that same kind of temperament and you can do anything for your country and don't go giving me that kind of stuff about you can't serve with anybody--you can do anything.

RR: It is not only that, I just don't think the Chief Justice should have served on it.

LBJ: Well the Chief Justice ought to do anything he can to save America and right now, we've got a very touchy thing and you wait 'til you look at this evidence, you wait until you look at this report. Now don't--I'm not going to lead you wrong and you're not going to be an old--

RR: I know that, but I have never--

LBJ: You've never turned your country down. This is not me, this is your country. And the members of the Special Commission are the Chief Justice Warren, Senator Richard Russell, and I go right down the list now. I've got Allen Dulles, John McCloy, but you've got, you're my man on that Commission and you're going to do it and don't tell me what you can do and what you can't. Because I can't arrest you and I'm not going to put the FBI on you but you're goddamned

sure going to serve, I'll tell you that, and A.W. Moursund is here and he wants to tell you how much all of us love you. Wait a minute--

RR: Well, Mr. President, you ought to have told me you were going to name me.

LBJ: I told you, I told you--today I was going to name the Chief Justice when I called you!

RR: You did not--

LBJ: I did--

RR: You talked about getting somebody from the Supreme Court. You didn't tell me you were going to name him.

LBJ: I told you, I told you I was going to name Warren and you said it would be better to name Warren.

RR: Oh, no--and I said Clark wouldn't do.

LBJ: No, that's right and I've got to get the highest Justice I can get. He turned Bobby Kennedy down! Bobby, they talked to him and he just said he wouldn't serve under any circumstances. I called him down here and I spent an hour with him and I begged him as much as I'm begging you. I just said, now here's the situation. I want to tell you.

RR: You've never begged me. You've always told me.

LBJ: No, I haven't. No I haven't.

RR: Mr. President, please now.

LBJ: No. It is already done. It has been announced.

RR: You mean you've given that.

LBJ: Yes sir. I gave the announcement. It is already in the papers and you're on it and you're going to be my man on it and you forget that. Now wait a minute AW wants to say a word to you and I'll be back.

AW: Hello, Senator? Well we're just sitting here talking and he says I've got one man on there that's smarter than all the rest of them put together--

RR: You don't have to butter me up.

AW: I ain't buttering you up, Senator. You know I'm not that kind of a fellow. I just heard that and I wanted you to know it. Hell, he's depending on you, you know that. And he just got through saying, he said I've got one man on there that's smarter than all the rest of them put together--

RR: [Laughter]

AW: That's the truth and you know it.

RR: Well, AW, I don't know when I've been so unhappy about a thing as I am this.

AW: Well, I know, but you can take 'em, God Almighty you've taken them for years and the hard ones and the tough ones and you can take care of it and you can take care of yourself--

RR: How are things down in Texas... kill any deer down there this year?

AW: But you come see us. But don't say you can't do anything cause you're the best "can-do" man there is.

RR: Oh no, oh no [laughing]

LBJ: Dick? Now, we're going into a lot of problems. I saw uh, we had lunch together and I saw Sanders and I've seen a good many people. Saw Wilkins today, had a long talk with him. Now these things are going to be developing. And I know you're going to have your reservations and your modesty--

[tape error]

LBJ: Now wait a minute, I understand that. But now your President's asking you to do these things and there are some things I want you in besides Civil Rights. And by God you're going to be in them because I can't run this country by myself.

RR: You know damned well my future is behind me and that is not entering into it at all.

LBJ: Well, your future is your country and you're going to do everything you can to serve America.

RR: I just haven't, I can't do it-- I haven't got the time.

LBJ: All right, we'll just make the time--

RR: With all my Georgia items in there.

LBJ: Well, we'll make the time, there's not going to be any time to begin with. All you'll do is evaluate a Hoover report he has already made.

RR: I don't think they'll move that fast on it.

LBJ: Well, OK, well then we won't move any faster than you want to move but you're going to lend your name to this thing because you're head of the CIA Committee in the Senate and you're going to have Fulbright and Hickenlooper on it because this thing is breaking faster than you think! And I've already talked to Hickenlooper and Fulbright and asked them to go with you, sit on your Committee because I don't want these things torn up. Secretary of State came over here this afternoon. He's deeply concerned, Dick, about the idea that they're spreading throughout the communist world that Khrushchev killed Kennedy. Now he didn't. He didn't have a damned thing to do with it.

RR: Well, I don't think he did directly. I know Khrushchev didn't because he thought he'd get along better with Kennedy.

LBJ: All right, but we've got to have some people--

RR: I wouldn't be surprised if Castro had--

LBJ: All right then, okay. That's what we want to know and people have got confidence in you. And you can just be surprised or not surprised. They want to know what you think. And A.W. Moursund is one that wants to know what you think.

RR: You're taking advantage of me, Mr. President, but of course--.

LBJ: No. No. No. I'm not taking advantage of you. I'm going to take a hell of a lot of advantage of you my friend, cause you made me and I know it and I don't ever forget. And I'm going to be taking advantage of you a good deal, but you're going to serve your country and do what is right and if you can't do it, you get that damned little Bobby up there and let him twist your tail and put a cockle burr under it. Where is he?

RR: I don't know--he's in Atlanta tonight.

LBJ: Well, you just tell him to get ready because I'm going to need him and you just tell him that.

RR: I saw he and Vandiver this afternoon, for about thirty minutes they came by here--

LBJ: Well, just tell either one of them that I just would like to use them any place because I'm a Russell protégé and I don't forget my friends and I want you to stand up and be counted and I don't want to beg you, by God to serve on these things that amount to something.

RR: I know but this is a sort of rough one.

LBJ: No, it is not rough, what is rough about this? I talked to Jim Eastland. Jim Eastland said this is the best thing that ever happened. I talked to Tom Dodd, I've talked to everybody and not a damned one of them. All those folks are going to be part of this.

RR: Yes sir, I'm sure they will.

LBJ: They had a full-scale investigation going Dick with the TV up there, they had the House Un-American Activities Committee in it--

RR: Well all of that was a lot of crap and they shouldn't have done it.

LBJ: Well of course, but how do I stop it? How do I stop it, Dick? Now don't tell me that I've worked all-day and done wrong.

RR: I didn't say you'd done wrong, I just said they ought not to have had that kind of a hearing and they ought to have stopped it and it could have been stopped some other way. I could have stopped it in the Senate.

LBJ: What do you think I've done wrong now by appointing you on a Commission?

RR: Well, I just don't like Warren, I don't like--

LBJ: Well, of course, you don't like Warren, but you'll like him before it is over with--.

RR: I haven't got any confidence in him.

LBJ: Well, you can give him some confidence. God damn it! Associate with him, now you're not--you've got nothing to. I'm not afraid to put your intelligence against Warren's. Now by God, I want a man on that Commission and I've got one--

RR: I don't know about the intelligence, of course [tape error] and I feel like I'm being kidded. But if you think--

LBJ: Well, if you think, [tape error] now Dick do you think I'd kid you?

RR: If it is for the good country you know dammed well I'll do it and I'll do it for you for that matter. I still feel like it sort of getting wrapped up.

LBJ: Dick do you remember when you met at the Canton Hotel in 1952? When we had breakfast there one morning. [tape error]

RR: Yes I think I do.

LBJ: All right. Do you think I'm kidding you?

RR: Now I don't think you're kidding me [laughing], but I think well, I'm not going to say anymore, Mr. President. I'm at your command and I'll do anything you want me to do.

LBJ: Well you damned sure going to be at my command. You're going to be at my command as long as I'm here.

RR: I do wish you be a little more deliberate and considerate next time about it, but this time, of course, if you've done this I'm going to do it and go through with, and say I think it is a wonderful idea.

LBJ: Well, I'm not going to be any more deliberate than I've been about this cause I've been pretty deliberate but I'm going to have you on a good God-damned many things that I have to decide and you're going to be America's representative, and I don't want any special obligation. I just know you're going to call them as you [tape error] see them and I've served under you and I don't give a damned if you have to serve with a Republican, if you have to serve with a communist, if you have to serve with a Negro, or if you have to serve with a thug, or if you have to serve with A. W. Moursund.

RR: I can serve with a Communist, and I can serve with a Negro, I can serve with a Chinaman--

LBJ: Well you may have to serve with A. W. Moursund.

RR: And if I can serve with A. W. Moursund, I would say, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to serve with you, Judge Moursund, but uh, well, we don't discuss it any further Mr. President, I'll serve.

LBJ: OK, Dick and give Bobby my love and tell him he'd better get ready to give up that fruitful law practice he's got--

RR: He's been appointed to the Georgia Court of Appeals now you see. I got him on there--

LBJ: Oh God Almighty.

RR: He's making as much money as I am.

LBJ: Well about Vandiver?

RR: Well, he's running for Governor next time and will be elected.

LBJ: Hmm. Well, who in the hell is going to help me besides you?

RR: Well, those boys will help you if you need them.

LBJ: Well I need them!

RR: God damn it, they're harder for you then I was, don't you remember?

LBJ: No, no, I never did, nobody ever has been more to me than you have Dick, except my mother.

RR: [Laughter]

LBJ: No, no, that's true. I've bothered you more and made you spend more hours with me telling me what's right and wrong than anybody except my mother.

RR: I've done more than anybody wants to do.

LBJ: No, I never made you do anything that was wrong. I never made you do anything wrong.

RR: I didn't say wrong. I said more things I didn't want to do, but Bobby and Ernie are two of the most loyal friends you've got on earth.

LBJ: I know that.

RR: They both called me up and said you've just got to do whatever Mr. Johnson says.

LBJ: No, I don't want you to do that. I just want to counsel with you and I just want your judgment and your wisdom and I don't expect us to agree on--

RR: For whatever it's worth you've got it, but--

LBJ: I'm going to have it because I haven't got any daddy and you're going to be it, now just forget that.

RR: Well, Mr. President, you know. I think you know me.

LBJ: I do. I do. I know you for your country and period. Now you just get ready to do this and you're my man on there, and period.

RR: Well if you hadn't announced it, I would absolutely be--

LBJ: No, you wouldn't. No, you wouldn't.

RR: Yes, I would. Yes I would.

LBJ: I told Warren, Warren told me he wouldn't do it under any circumstances didn't think the Supreme Court Justice ought to go on it, he wouldn't have any thing to do with it. He said a man that criticized this fellow that went on the Nuremberg trial, Jackson, he told me what he thought about Goldberg. He thought he was terrible [unintelligible] and I said let me read you one report. And I just picked up one report and read it to him. And I said okay, now, forty million Americans are involved here.

RR: I may be wholly wrong, but I think Mr. Warren would serve on anything you'd give him any publicity on.

LBJ: Well you want me to tell you the truth? You know what happened? Bobby and them went up to see him today and he turned them down cold and said "no." Two hours later I called him and ordered him down here and he didn't want to come. I insisted he come, he came down here and told me no twice and I just pulled out what Hoover told me about a little incident in Mexico City and I say now, 'I don't want Mr. Khrushchev to be told tomorrow and be testifying before a camera that he killed this fellow and that Castro killed him and all I want you to do is look at the facts and bring in other facts you want in here, and determined who killed the President and I think you'd put on your uniform of World War I, fat as you are, and do anything you could to save one American life. And I'm surprised that you the Chief Justice of the United States would turn me down.' And he started crying and said, well I won't turn you down. I'll just do whatever you say, but he turned the Attorney General down.

RR: Well, you ought not to be so persuasive.

LBJ: Well, I think I ought to.

RR: I think you did wrong in getting Warren and I know damned well you did wrong getting me but I hope to do the best we can.

LBJ: I think that's what you'll do. That's the kind of Americans both of you are. Goodnight.

RR: Goodnight

President Johnson orders pants from Joe Haggar.

August. 9, 1964

Operator: Go ahead sir

LBJ: Mr. Haggar?

JH: Yes this is Joe Haggar

LBJ: Joe, is your father the one that makes clothes?

JH: Yes sir - we're all together

LBJ: Uh huh. You all made me some real lightweight slacks, uh, that he just made up on his own and sent to me 3 or 4 months ago. There's a light brown and a light green, a rather soft green, a soft brown.

JH: Yes sir

LBJ: and they're real lightweight now and I need about six pairs for summer wear.

JH: yes sir

LBJ: I want a couple, maybe three of the light brown kind of a almost powder color like a powder on a ladies face. Then they were some green and some light pair, if you had a blue in that or a black, then I'd have one blue and one black. I need about six pairs to wear around in the evening when I come in from work

JH: yes sir

LBJ: I need...they're about a half a inch too tight in the waist.

JH: Do you recall sir the exact size, I just want to make sure we get them right for you

LBJ: No, I don't know - you all just guessed at 'em I think, some - wouldn't you the measurement there?

JH: we can find it for you

LBJ: well I can send you a pair. I want them half a inch larger in the waist than they were before except I want two or three inches of stuff left back in there so I can take them up. I vary ten or 15

pounds a month.

JH: alright sir

LBJ: So leave me at least two and a half, three inches in the back where I can let them out or take them up. And make these a half an inch bigger in the waist. And make the pockets at least an inch longer, my money, my knife, everything falls out - wait just a minute.

Operator: Would you hold on a minute please?

[conversation on hold for two minutes]

LBJ: Now the pockets, when you sit down, everything falls out, your money, your knife, everything, so I need at least another inch in the pockets. And another thing - the crotch, down where your nuts hang - is always a little too tight, so when you make them up, give me an inch that I can let out there, uh because they cut me, it's just like riding a wire fence. These are almost, these are the best I've had anywhere in the United States,

JH: Fine

LBJ: But, uh when I gain a little weight they cut me under there. So, leave me , you never do have much of margin there. See if you can't leave me an inch from where the zipper (burps) ends, round, under my , back to my bung hole, so I can let it out there if I need to.

JH: Right

LBJ: Now be sure you have the best zippers in them. These are good that I have. If you get those to me I would sure be grateful

JH: Fine, Now where would you like them sent please?

LBJ: White House.

JH: Fine

LBJ: Now, uh, I don't guess there is any chance of getting a very lightweight shirt, sport shirt to go with that slack, is there? That same color?

JH: We don't make them, but we can have them made up for you.

LBJ: If you might look around, I wear about a 17, extra long.

JH: Would you like in the same fabric?

LBJ: Yeah I sure would, I don't know whether that's too heavy for a shirt.

JH: I think it'd be too heavy for a shirt.

LBJ: I sure want the lightest I can, in the same color or matching it. If you don't mind, find me somebody up there who makes good shirts and make a shirt to match each one of them and if they're good, we'll order some more.

JH: Fine

LBJ: I just sure will appreciate this, I need it more than anything. And uh, now that's a..about it. I guess I could get a jacket made outta that if I wanted to, couldn't I?

JH: I think that - didn't Sam Haggard have some jackets made?

LBJ: Yeah you sent me some jackets some earlier, but they were way too short. They hit me about halfway down my belly. I have a much longer waist. But I thought if they had material like that and somebody could make me a jacket, I'd sent them a sample to copy from.

JH: Well I tell you what, you send us this, we'll find someone to make it

LBJ: - ok

JH: We'll supply the material to match it

LBJ: Ok, I'll do that. Uh now, how do I - can you give this boy the address because I'm running to a funeral and give this boy the address to where we can send the trousers - don't worry, you'll get the measurements out of them and add a half an inch to the back and an give us couple of an inch to the pockets and a inch underneath to we can let them out.

JH: What you 'd like is a little more stride in the crotch

LBJ: Yeah that's right. What I'd like is to give me a half a inch more then leave me some more. Ok here he is.

JH: Thank you, I'm glad you enjoyed the others